

Local Boundary Commission
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Re: Written comments on the standards of Borough Incorporation for the proposed Prince of Wales Model Borough

I am against the establishment of any borough on Prince of Wales Island at this time.

I have lived in Thorne Bay for 20+ years and have witnessed many changes, starting with the growth of the resident population and local economy to a now severe decline in the island wide population and economy. Even since the 2000 census, the population has fallen by probably as much as 50% in some communities.

Economic Capacity of the Region

There is not currently an economic base on Prince of Wales Island to support a borough government let alone support the objectives of having a borough established. Our population is not currently large enough or stable enough. We can't even finance our current city government at the level of as recent as two years ago.

The logging and road building crews are gone. The price of commercially caught fish is down. Many of the support businesses have folded and moved away. The amount of private land/property on the island is relatively small as other land owners such as the U.S. Forest Service, State of Alaska, Mental Health Trust, University of Alaska, and Native Corporations all own large tracts. All these non taxed land owners make a borough less economically viable. The burden would be on the remaining depressed residents.

Large and Stable Population

As I stated above the logging and road building crews are mostly gone from this island and from all of Southeast Alaska. Many of the past populations number referred to in your draft are related to a transit logging industry that is now gone. The current population is not stable due to a lack of jobs and will not be stable until a new industry becomes established. We have no idea what that industry might be.

Sufficiently Interrelated and Integrated to Support a Borough Government

Prince of Wales is an island. That only makes us geographically located in the same place. Some communities on the island are isolated, without road access, because they like it that way. Other communities are native based with their own land base, health care system, their own jobs not open to others, and different hunting and fishing regulation. The rest of the island has reduced and lost it's integration with the loss of our logging industry. Within the last three years the interaction has been reduced to minor contact while shopping for goods and services. My experience from past days of active logging crews is that workers came from all over the island to work together and there-in exchange ideas and keep in contact with other communities. We used to know who lived in the other communities and what their concerns were. Not so much anymore.

A Borough Government would Serve the Broad Public

Sometimes it is hard to see how one more level of government would serve the public. The continuing controversy that goes on between the Ketchikan Borough and the City of Ketchikan governments is not needed nor requested on Prince of Wales Island. However, it is conceivable that in times of good economic health, with a stable population, and good interaction between island communities that one local entity with borough powers could be in the best interest of Prince of Wales Island. To establish that government ahead of that time would be premature and would probably create an even deeper recession on the island.

In summary I don't see how Prince of Wales Island currently meets the standards of Borough incorporation. As a long time resident, I am against the establishment of any borough government at this time on Prince of Wales Island.

Sincerely Submitted,

